

Third Sunday in June by ThatHCWriter

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Angst, Canonical Character Death, Dustin Henderson Needs a Hug, F/M, Family Feels, Father-Daughter Relationship, Father-Son Relationship, Gen, Good Babysitter Steve Harrington, Good Parent Jim "Chief" Hopper, Hurt/Comfort, Implied/Referenced Child Abuse, Lonnie Byers Being an Asshole, Married Joyce Byers/Jim "Chief" Hopper, Past Character Death, Protective Steve Harrington, do not copy to another site

Language: English

Characters: Dustin Henderson, Dustin Henderson's Father, Eleven | Jane Hopper, Jim "Chief" Hopper, Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Lucas Sinclair, Lucas Sinclair's Father, Steve Harrington, Will Byers

Relationships: Eleven | Jane Hopper & Jim "Chief" Hopper, Jonathan Byers & Jim "Chief" Hopper, Joyce Byers/Jim "Chief" Hopper, Lucas Sinclair & Mr. Sinclair, Mike Wheeler & Ted Wheeler, Steve Harrington & Dustin Henderson, Will Byers & Jim "Chief" Hopper

Status: Completed

Published: 2021-04-25

Updated: 2021-04-25

Packaged: 2022-04-01 01:33:25

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences

Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 1

Words: 1,660

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

Fathers day in Hawkins Indiana.

In a word, it's complicated.

Or, a look at the Party on the third Sunday in June.

Third Sunday in June

Author's Note:

I know it's not father's day but this idea was just begging to be written. Nothing major warning wise, please enjoy!

And tissues. You might want tissues.

To Lucas Sinclair, today was almost fun.

It was a day spent with his family, and though Erica was being her annoying self all throughout it, he had to admit it was nice. His dad had picked their favorite restaurant for lunch, had them watch an old family favorite movie, and end the night with gifts and dessert. It wasn't his favorite day of the year, not by a distant long shot, but there was a part of him that soaked it in.

Even through his dad's awful jokes and even worse singing, even through the traditions his mom insisted on following through with even though he'd long ago outgrown them, even through Erica's bratty outbursts that were laughed off by the rest of his family, he couldn't help but feel grateful.

Because when he looked around at his friends, he realized his experience was painfully unique.

To Mike Wheeler, today was... Awkward.

Sure, his mom and Nancy tried to do things, tried to make it at least sort of special, but his dad just didn't seem to care. He'd offer a smile, a slight shrug, a coarse "thank you honey" to his mom whenever she'd try and do something nice.

Thankfully, the *your father just doesn't like to celebrate things like this, we can show how much we appreciate him just by letting him do what he wants today* talks ended after he left third grade, but the strange, lingering feelings remained.

There was something hollow about today for the entire Wheeler family.

He loved his dad, that much was true, but there were days where he debated how mutual that love really was. It hurt, but signs weren't deniable.

He'd say "I love you," and he'd get a response, but it never felt like it meant much of anything.

Oh well, he'd think. Mother's day is better anyway.

To El, today got better with every passing year.

She had never even heard the word "Father's Day" until Mike brought it up a few years ago, but it quickly became a day she looked forward to. Hop seemed to like it more and more too, as they got closer he seemed to want to do more to celebrate.

El's pretty sure it has something to do with Joyce, Jonathan and Will.

They did some stuff for Father's Day when it was just them in the cabin, but it was never anything beyond some snacks and a few western movies but now that she lived with the Byers, it seemed to actually take up his mind.

Because for Jonathan and Will Byers, today tasted bitter enough to want to forget it all together.

Hell, Jonathan did forget it, at least for a while. He didn't get anything, didn't make any plans, didn't even pay it any mind until his mom mentioned it to him casually one morning. He froze when she did. "Shit, I forgot to... Damn, I'm sorry."

"It's okay, Jonathan. Believe me, he understands." *Of course he did*, Joyce thought before she could stop herself, *Hop had his own reasons to want to forget about Sunday*. Jonathan nodded, casually heading out to work as if the conversation didn't happen.

When Sunday came, no one said the words "Happy Father's day" in

that house. It was almost like Hopper thought those words would summon the ghost he carried with him everywhere he went, like Jonathan thought those words would mean another tirade, like Will thought those words would mean another torn drawing and dashed dream, like Joyce thought those words would mean another rant about how little being a father really meant, and how all of that shit was her fault.

So it was El who finally said it. It was before dinner, a casual moment in the kitchen punctuated by a soft "Happy Father's Day, Hop." He was caught off guard by how much he smiled at the words, gently ruffling the girl's unruly hair.

"Thanks kiddo." The words went unsaid the rest of the night, but that wasn't to say it didn't feel like a celebration. It was still a great night, complete with board games, a movie, dessert and some of the best laughter the group had in months.

And for the first time in Jonathan and Will's lives, it really did feel like a holiday.

As the night wound down and the kids went to sleep, Joyce stayed with Hopper on the couch, her head resting comfortably on his shoulder as he gently wrapped an arm around her. "Thanks. For today," Joyce said, not turning to face him. He glanced down at her, his eyebrows scrunched in confusion. Joyce swallowed hard, "I can't remember the last time they had a good Father's Day." Hopper hummed sadly, pulling her closer and kissing her head. "I mean," Joyce continued softly, "Today can't be easy for you either...." She trailed off, glancing up at him. He only slightly winced, humming an affirmative.

"Yeah... For a while, it really wasn't. But El, and the boys, they uh... They make it easier to be happy today. Everyday, honestly." Joyce chuckled a bit, leaning into his neck.

"I love you," she said softly. He turned her chin up to face him, kissing her gently.

"Love you too." As he sat on the couch, drinking in the serenity and the low sound of the TV, his thoughts didn't drift from the day's

success.

Now that he thought about it, today was getting better every year for Hopper, too.

To Steve Harrington, today was something he could take or leave.

He'd called his dad that morning, off on business with his mom, and said all the perfunctory things, not expecting to even give the holiday a shred of thought for the rest of the day. That's how it usually went, after all, with him calling in the morning and at night and spending the rest of the day doing whatever the hell came to mind in the moment.

He was starting to prepare his day, make plans, call people, just have a normal Sunday, when his doorbell rang. Odd, sure, but he chalked it up to everyday things, casually heading to the door.

He expected a package, maybe a boy scout, but definitely not Dustin.

Especially not a Dustin who was practically lighting up with a sense of wrongness Steve couldn't put his finger on.

Robin would call it his motherly instincts. He'd tell her to kindly fuck off.

"Woah, hey, what's going on?" Dustin huffed, heading into the house without asking. Steve threw his hands up and followed him, but getting angry didn't feel right. "Dustin, talk to me. Come on, you can't just..."

"I couldn't stay there for any longer," Dustin blurted out like he was confessing to a crime. Steve froze.

"What?"

"My house. I can't.... Today sucks, Steve. Today really, really sucks." Steve's stomach twisted. He sat down on a nearby chair to steady himself, trying to get Dustin's eye contact.

"Can you... Do you wanna talk about it.. I don't..." Steve stumbled, drawing a sigh from Dustin.

"Before you ask, he's dead, Steve. My dad. It'll be seven years next month." Dustin's voice cracked a bit at the end, his posture shrinking a bit. Steve didn't know how to react, his eyes glued in shock to the younger boy.

Today held a lot of meanings for the people around him, and yet no one seemed to realize:

To Dustin Henderson, today was a bleeding, gaping wound.

And even though he couldn't stitch it up, Steve would try his hardest to at least dull the pain for a moment.

He lead Dustin to the couch, offering him a blanket and sitting next to him, staying quiet and steady. His mind was racing with possible solutions, things to say, ways to try and comfort the kid in front of him, but he came up completely, stupidly empty.

"I don't even have many memories of him..." Dustin said, stirring Steve a bit, "Good or bad. Sometimes I just feel stupid, you know? Like why do I care so much about a guy I don't even really know? I miss him and sometimes I feel like I don't even know why." Steve winced. *Wow, cutting deep there, kid.*

"But he's still your dad," Steve said, casually lolling his head toward Dustin, "It still has to be hard. It's hard on your mom, too. It's okay to feel like that." Dustin's eyes began to well up, and on instinct, Steve allowed an arm to pull him into a side hug. It startled him, but he quickly leaned in, a wet spot growing on Steve's shirt quickly. He gently rested a hand in the kid's hair, a gesture that tugged hard at something in his gut he hadn't thought about for a while.

"Thanks, Steve," he said softly, almost embarrassedly as he pulled away.

"Don't mention it. My folks are out of town, so if it makes it easier, you can stay here as long as you want," Steve paused for a minute, bringing his tone to a tactful whisper, "You don't need to spend today

alone." Dustin nodded, sitting back and making himself a bit more comfortable.

The conversation naturally started to drift, first to Suzie, then to work, then to whatever nerdy topic came to Dustin's mind. Steve didn't have the heart to stop his rambling, because the smile slowly regaining its presence on his face was more than worth a few hours of confusion and boredom. That's how they spent the rest of the day, talking and laughing and exchanging jokes like it was any normal day, an illusion Steve was happy to try and uphold.

Neither of them minded when the conversation lasted well into the night, and even though Steve tried to convince him not to, Dustin went home safely after the midnight hour.

When it was officially a day that didn't make the world feel so heavy.

Author's Note:

So, sorry? Thanks for reading, and I hope you liked it!

Comments and kudos mean the absolute world, have a wonderful day!